

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 007690

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN TERMS ISRAELI RELEASE OF 10 PRISONERS  
"POSITIVE"; NEGOTIATIONS TO CONTINUE

REF: A. AMMAN 7657 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. AMMAN 7402

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (U) Jordanian Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher told the press that the Israeli cabinet decision on November 23 to release ten Jordanian prisoners as part of an Eid al-Fitr gesture was a "positive development," but that the GOJ would continue to work towards the release of all Jordanians in Israeli custody. Muasher said his Israeli counterpart Silvan Shalom informed him of the decision. The prisoners are expected to arrive in Jordan on November 25, the first day of the Feast marking the end of Ramadan.

[1](#)2. (U) "The release came as a response to the efforts exerted by His Majesty King Abdullah and the government in this regard," Muasher said in a press statement, stressing "at the same time that this is the first group of prisoners who will be released." He added: "We will continue our efforts to release the remaining prisoners, and following Eid al-Fitr there will be intensive negotiations to secure their release."

[1](#)3. (U) Muasher did not reveal the identities of the ten prisoners, but press reports suggest four were being held for "security reasons," (two on weapons and/or explosives charges and two for "anti-Israeli activities.") The other six were being held for illegal entry into Israel.

[1](#)4. (U) Meanwhile, in a scathing lead editorial, the normally subdued, pro-government English-language Jordan Times slammed the Israeli decision, charging that "to most Jordanians, Sharon's gesture is more a humiliation and a provocation, than anything else." The editorial, titled "With Friends Like These," noted that "adding insult to injury, the right-wing Sharon government almost appears more responsive and at ease in negotiations with Hizballah than with a sovereign country with which it has a peace treaty."

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

[1](#)5. (C) This is a small but unsatisfactory victory for Muasher who has taken the lead in contentious prisoner release negotiations with Israel (ref A notal). We suspect GOJ officials' true feelings are more in line with the Jordan Times misleading editorial than Muasher's public statements. What Muasher really wanted and what we expect he will keep pushing on is the release the four Jordanians arrested before the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty (reftel B).

Please visit Embassy Amman's classified web site at <http://www.state.sgov/p/nea/amman/> or access the site through the Department of State's SIPRNET home page.  
GNEHM